

# critical digest

305 FIFTH AVENUE, N. Y. 17, N. Y.

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T. M. KRAUS

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## New York Theatre Diary

Fledermaus- City Center 5/19/54. Second production of the NYC Light Opera Company. English version by Ruth and Thomas Martin, directed by Glenn Jordan. With Jack Russell, Adelaide Bishop, Johy Tyers and Colee Worth.. Montserrat- Barbizon Plaza 5/25/54. Maurice Glazer, Jack & Harry Gressen present the Equity Library production of the Lillian Hellman drama with Sy Travers, Joseph Ruskin and Alan Bergmann.

## Current Theatre Reviews

The Pajama Game- St James 5/13/54. 100% raves. All departments of the new musical comedy by George Abbott and Richard Bissell shared in the critical applause. This included Abbott, both as author and director, Richard Adler and Jerry Ross for a lively score, Eddie Foy, Jr, John Raitt and Janis Paige heading the cast, Critics agreed that dancer Carol Haney is the discovery of the season. Atkinson, Times, started his notice listing show as best musical of season. Bright, brassy and jubilantly sassy added Kerr, Herald Tribune. A funny, frisky musical comedy which will be harder to get into than out of, noted Chapman, News. A riot of fun from the overture to the finale, reported Coleman, Mirror. Though Watts, Post, found the book uninteresting as wither satire or realism of modern factory problems, he still enjoyed the evening very much for its vigor, vitality and sense of excitement. Fast, raucous and rollicking, the best book show since Guys and Dolls, commented McClain, Journal American.

The Sea-Gull-Phoenix- 5/11/54. After admitting that this is one of Chekhov's masterpieces the daily drama critics filed notices ranging from outright pros to outright cons. And in the middle the majority of the aisle-sitters voted in favour of the final production of the season at the 2nd Avenue Theatre for presenting the classic drama. Each had reservations about the all-star acting company which includes Judith Evelyn, Montgomery Clift, Sam Jaffe, June Walker, Maureen Stapleton, and Kevin McCarthy. The outright cons were filed by Kerr, Herald Tribune, and McClain, Journal American. Latter simply don't like it as a play. Herald Tribune man okayed a handful of the performances but didn't think actors brought play to life. The outright pro was filed by Chapman, News, who rated it as one of the most exciting and satisfying performances of the year. A number of highly individualistic performances combine to make good theatre, he summed up. Times, Mirror, Post, and World Telegram & Sun critics approved efforts of producers Houghton and Hambleton in presenting the classic, but each had many negative comments on the various actors. Until we have a finely attuned company that can play such scripts, we shall have to be satisfied with the mixed styles inherent in the work of good actors who are not accustomed to play together, commented Atkinson, Times. The lack of style is a commentary on what happens to the NY Theatre when it neglects the classics, Coleman, Mirror, pointed out. If nothing else production opens the door for lengthy debate on it should or should not be done, remarked Hawkins, WT&S. Despite the name actors it seemed disappointingly colorless and unexciting to Watts, Post. On the whole he felt it lacked distinction. Play is scheduled for a limited four week run. Adaptation is credited to cast members Clift, Roanova and McCarthy.

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' Off Broadway '

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NY's "French Art Theatre" is presenting Racine's tragedy Berenice and Pirandello's Chacun Sa Verite at Provincetown Playhouse, 131 MacDougal May 25-30. This is a French language project of the French University of NY's Centre D'Art Dramatique.

Roddy McDowell and Vicki Cummings have the leads in The Homeward Look due at De Lys June 5...Therese will be presented for a return engagement May 22 by "8 40 Theatre" of West Side YMCA, 5 W 63...Here Comes the Clowns Saturday matinee at the Cherry Lane played a \$1 top student price...Plays and Players are presenting Q'Casey's Bedtime Story and Shaw's Village Wooing week-ends at Masters Institute, 310 Riverside Drive... Hebrew Actors Union, in an effort to create employment for its members, is presenting a Yiddish comedy-drama Two Mothers weekends at Brooklyn Parkway.

Here Comes the Clowns production of Theatre Album at Cherry Lane received another pair of diverse notices. Though rough around the edges, Frank, Women's Wear, found the proper feeling of solidity and worth in the Barry fantasy. Cast, for most part, was termed splendid. On the con side, Keating, Cue, found it miscast and poorly directed.

Building Blocks, the new play at Two by Four Theatre, 83 E 4, won a mild recommendation from Kerner, Women's Wear. When author Eugene Feist rises to the occasion, the cast and director do likewise.

King Coit Children's Theatre production of the Hindu tale Nala and Damayanti was recommended by Hewes, Saturday Review, to any adult interested in rare theatrical delicacies. He found it a more authentic production of a fairy tale than Ondine. It will be repeated May 19-20 at 5 PM at Hotel Sutton Theatre, 330 E 56.

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' Vaudeville '

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Palace vaude show features Carla Fernando, Joe Phillips, Sharkey, and 4 Whirlwinds.

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' Other Broadways '

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Hartford, Conn, New Parsons Theatre will probably close at end of its third season...A Bethel, Ohio high school actor who played a "gunman" in his senior class play, Books and Crooks, fired 15 shots at police officers after challenging them to a gun duel after the show...Princess Margaret is the assistant director of a play being presented for charity at London's Scala Theatre...Boston University will expand its theatre arts courses and give Bachelor in Fine Arts degrees.

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' Theatre Book Notes '

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Random House has published In the Summer House, The Remarkable Mr. Penny-packer, Ondine and The Prescott Proposals. ...Bernard Sobel will revise his "Theatre Handbook" for Crown... "Shakespeare: Of an Age and For All Time" edited by Charles Tyler Prouty will be published in June by Shoe String Press of Hamden, Conn

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' Theatre TV & Radio Notes '

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Kaye Ballard, Golden Apple, has been signed to a TV contract by NBC...Orson Bean, Almanac, will head CBS TV Blue Angel show this summer...NBC Radio presented a one hour "Salute to Eugene O'Neill" program May 15 with Brooks Atkinson and scenes from 4 plays acted by Shirley Booth, Helen Hayes, Joseph Cotton, Karl Malden.

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' "CD" Gift Coupon '

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**CRITICS PRO CRITICS...** NYC critics feel they rated King of Hearts by Kerr, Herald Tribune and Mademoiselle Colombe, adapted by Kronenberger, Time, fairly, Variety annual survey of reviewer's views reveals. But several admitted they still felt strongly about Season in the Sun by Gibbs, New Yorker. Kerr commented that the notices on the show he directed were honest, candid, perceptive and brilliantly written. He meant, he added, the two good notices. Kronenberger's comments on the reviews of his show were not included in the round-up.

**COLUMN TIPS...** Gwen Verdon was persuaded to remain in Can-Can, hears Kilgallen, by a 100% salary hike... Broadway's newest star, Carol Haney, Pajama Game, was Gene Kelly's assistant in Hollywood until George Abbott brought her East, reports Farrell... Broadway actors, chorus girls, etc are betting on the stock market again, notes Sobol.

**COMIC LESSON...** Instead of running to the resort areas for some quick dough, comics might give serious consideration to a season in summer stock where they can learn their trade, suggests "Billboard" editorial. Trade-paper points out that Montgomery Clift, who gets \$150,000 a picture, is in NYC earning \$100 a week at the Phoenix. Other actors consider such training "refresher" courses for which they got paid.

**CRITICAL THOUGHTS...** Times third string critic attended and left in the middle of Artists' Theatre Ticklish Acrobat, states Bentley, New Republic. Rumor has it, the weekly critic continues, that Atkinson, Times, decided his paper would not be interested in attending any Artists' Theatre shows in the future. Bentley wonders since when has Atkinson limited his coverage to good shows?... There are more good dramas on TV in one week that there are on Broadway in a full season, former drama critic Burton Rascoe stated at a City College Press Forum.

**TALENT TIPS...** Betty Miller, Girl on the Via Flaminia, performance reveals great concentration and one that has depth and variety and excitement in its very elusiveness, sums up Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun... Billie Worth in the Ethel Merman role in London's Call Me Madam seemed better than Merman, rates Watts, Post.

**INTERVIEW HI-LITES...** Eddie Foy and the Seven Little Foyes were arrested in almost every town they played for being under age, Eddie Foy, Jr, Pajama Game, recalled to Morehouse, WT&S. As to the current locations of the rest of his clan, the actor noted that Bryan is with Columbia Pictures in California, Charlie has a Hollywood night club where sister Mary works, Madeline is living in Los Angeles, Irving is in Taos, New Mexico. The name Foy was given their father by an actor in Chicago.

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 ' Pros & Cons by BCK '  
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The Sea Gull production at the Phoenix is an all-star production in name only. The ten name actors are playing in as many different styles. What many consider a classic is mumbled by at least one of the name actors. While another recites his lines loudly and clearly, but without feeling. Lack of rehearsal time is certainly one of the reasons, lack of interest may be another.

The current Equity-League of NY Theatres contract talks are stymied over the demanded 5% payroll tax for the Equity Welfare Fund. If granted at least 3 other unions would fight for same. This would mean the ticket buyer, currently enjoying a 10% cut due to lower taxes, would find the price of tickets raised 20% again. Clearly this is the answer to nothing.



New York's "newest" theatre will be the Cherry Lane Theatre. Kenneth Carrood, owner of the 135 year old Greenwich Village building which has been a theatre since 1924, has bought the chairs, lamps, dressing tables, panes, doors and brass frames of the Center Theatre which is now being torn down to make way for a nineteen story office building. He also wanted to buy some of the 3200 Center seats for the 200 seat theatre at 38 Commerce St, but found it was impractical. An air-conditioning system will also be installed at the Cherry Lane this summer. House will be host this summer to Punch Opera which opens July 6 with the first performance in this country of Murder in Three Keys by Dr. Erik Chishelm.

### Plays

The Confidential Clerk closes May 22...Sabrina Fair moves to Royale, Solid Gold Cadillac moves to Music Box...Oh, Men! Oh, Women! may take a 5 week vacation in July, The Fifth Season may do likewise...Leslie Stevens' The Champagne Complex will be produced next season by Alex Cohen...Playwrights Company hope to produce new plays by Maxwell Anderson and Robert Sherwood next season...This is The Army earned \$9 1/2 million for Army Emergency Relief. The copyright to songs in this show now will go to the "God Bless America" Fund, which aids Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls.

### People

Estimated NYC attendance at 30 shows, on and off Broadway, by "CD" is 181,000 for the current week...Josephine Hull "resting" from Solid Gold Cadillac. Paula Trueman is subbing...Mai Zetterling may replace Audrey Hepburn in Ondine...Tom Patterson, executive director of Stratford, Ontario, Shakespeare Festival, will be guest of "Drama Desk" meeting May 24...Geraldine Page married concert violinist Alexander Schneider...Wolcott Gibbs, New Yorker critic, will publish "The Fire Islander" weekly paper this summer...Friends of City Center will present a public forum on "The Promise and Dangers of Subsidized Theatres" May 24 at City Center with Marc Connelly, John Guttman, Celeste Holm, Rep. Javits, Daniel Mann and Walter Terry.

### Award Dept

Jean Dalrymple, director of the NYC Center, received a "Bravo" scroll from the NY Newspaper Women's Club...The Canada Lee Foundation presented national achievement awards to Elmer Rice, Harold Clurman, Fred O'Neal, Louis Peterson and Alan Patton for their theatrical contribution toward integration of minority people in the performing arts."

### Summer Playhouses

Margaret Truman will make her stage debut in summer stock this season...Albert Marre is revising Shaw's To Tru to be Good to be presented at Philadelphia's Playhouse in Park the week of July 5 with Ruth Ford and Zachary Scott.

### CRITICAL DIGEST

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### FIRST CLASS MAIL

